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OFFICE OF TRAINING

DIRECTIVE

COURSE: Instructor Training

SUBJECT: Methods of Instruction: Discussion Techniques HOURS: 1

25X1

METHOD OF PRESENTATION: Lecture INSTRUCTOR:

OBJECTIVES OF INSTRUCTION: To explain the various discussion techniques, including the directed discussion, conference, seminar, critique, panel and conference; to acquaint the student with the principles of planning and directing the various discussion techniques; to evaluate discussion techniques; to familiarize the student with questioning techniques.

25X1

SUMMARY OF PRESENTATION:

OUR WORK CONT. 9

SUBJECTS WITH WHICH COORDINATION IS REQUIRED:

REFERENCES:

Discussion Techniques;

REMARKS:

25 YEAR RE-REVIEW

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TAB

**Instructor Training Course
Lesson Plan**

Title : **Methods: Discussion Techniques** 50 minutes

Objectives : 1. To expl in the various discussion techniques, including the directed discussion, conference, seminar, critique, panel and conference.
2. To acquaint the student with the principles of planning and directing the various discussion techniques.
3. To evaluate discussion techniques.
4. To familiarize the student with questioning techniques.

References : [] "Discussion Techniques" []

Training Aids: Blackboard

Equipment : Seating arrangement to be changed to a discussion type of layout.

I. Presentation

A. Introduction (Motivation)

10

1. What is meant by "discussion."
2. When and how is it used?
3. Advantages and disadvantages

B. Forms of the discussion method

20

1. Directed discussion
2. Conference
3. Panel discussion
4. Seminar

C. Instructors Preparations for Discussion

10

1. Study materials
2. Study topics and questions
3. Discussion plan
 - a. Introduction
 - b. Seating arrangement
 - c. Uses of aids and devices

D. Student preparation and responsibilities

E. Techniques of conducting a discussion

-2-

1. General
2. Stimulating and curtailing discussion
3. Questioning technique
4. Transitional devices
5. Development of a summary

10

Total Time

50

TAB

METHODS OF INSTRUCTION: THE DISCUSSION

Definition and Uses of the Discussion Method.

In a previous reference, the lecture was examined as to its technique and value as a teaching process. It was emphasized that effective use of the lecture for instruction required provision for the student's participation through questions, comments, and discussions. A refinement of this process of explaining or telling is known as the discussion method of teaching. Principally, this method emphasizes the interchange of ideas between the instructor and the students, and between and among the students. The solution of a problem or the development of a logical conclusion is achieved by a mutual interchange of experience and thought with the instructor as the moderator or discussion leader. This method of instruction may be used for the purpose of clarifying, interpreting, evaluating and considering the application of facts or concepts which the student has read or studied.

Once fundamentals have been taught, by other methods of instruction, a switch should be made to the discussion for subjects requiring mental agility (to practical application for the manual skill subjects). The students must have some common knowledge or experience which should serve as a springboard for the discussion.

More specifically, the uses of this method may be listed as follows:

1. To emphasize the fundamental points of a lesson.
2. To supplement explanations, reading or practical exercises.
3. To determine how well students understand material and to establish new meanings and relationships.
4. To prepare students for the application of procedure or theory to specific situations.
5. To summarize and clarify points.
6. To prepare students for subsequent instruction.
7. To seek or develop answers, solve problems and evaluate proposals.

Advantages and Disadvantages.

The advantages of the discussion method are that the students are stimulated to think and prepare because they know they are expected

to participate; that each individual has an opportunity to express his ideas and have his doubts clarified; the instructor can observe how the class is learning and can correct misconceptions.

Discussions, however, are only as good as the discussion leader makes them. The technique demands that an instructor be alert and employ a variety of abilities to direct the discussion into the correct channels, to keep it within those channels and to secure participation of all students. Suggestions on the mechanics of this technique are examined in detail in later phases of this paper.

Forms of the Discussion Method.

The discussion method is adaptable for use as the sole method of instruction for a given unit of instruction. It may supplement or be used as one phase of a unit with other methods of instruction, particularly the problem-solving method. The form of the discussion is varied by its organization, purpose and conduct. The kinds of discussions listed below have been effective in this organization's training programs:

1. Directed Discussion:

The instructor knows the objectives or conclusions he wishes to establish. These are based on the study assignment (reading or observation) given the student. The instructor constantly steers the discussion to those ends. The primary objective of the instructor's questions or comments is to have the students learn something new, by a process of guided reasoning, from the knowledge already attained. The student's contributions are sought in terms of the application of facts, concepts, skills or principles rather than mere recitation of them. The students are expected to have at least a fair-to-good background in the subject in order to develop the material intelligently.

2. Conference:

In this type of discussion a group seeks to arrive at a mutual solution to a problem or to establish conclusions on an issue through expressions of opinions and attitudes, examination of relevant facts, and a harmonizing of understandings. The instructor or leader exercises control over the discussion in accordance with objectives of the conference and by having a plan for proceeding to a group conclusion. Students are expected to be prepared with pertinent facts, with logical opinions, evaluations of judgment, and suggestions for solutions to the problem or issue.

3. Panel Discussion:

Characteristic of this type of discussion is the examination of an issue or subject in front of a group or class by several persons representing the major viewpoints or presenting various aspects of the subject. The purpose of this is to develop the principal problems or topics to be discussed later with the group.

The leader, or instructor, guides the presentations by the panel members so as to bring out the main points of view. He establishes a general pattern for further thinking and discussion. Subsequently, he brings the group into the discussion. Predetermined conclusions or mutual opinions are not sought necessarily, although a summary is presented when the pattern of discussion, set by the instructor, has been developed adequately. The nature of this type of discussion requires a relatively high degree of knowledge and understanding of the main topics on the part of the students. Consequently, it is used frequently to terminate broad phases of instruction with the purpose of emphasizing major problems which will confront the students or to emphasize the necessity for implementing principles with their own judgments. Students are expected to participate in the latter phases of the discussion by raising questions or making contributions of their own.

4. Seminar:

In this method of discussion the emphasis in presentation is shifted from a problem presented by the instructor to that of individual problems, studies, theses, or conclusions presented by the students. The students look to the instructor and to the other members of the group for constructive criticism and advice. Inherently it will be used only at the advanced student-level. The initial guidance offered by the instructor consists of assisting the student to outline his problem and devise a research plan. In the seminar sessions, the instructor directs the attention of the group to the general principle and problems that must be considered as the student proceeds with his research. Frequently in these sessions, the instructor will summarize for the researcher the opinion of the group on the problem or topic discussed. However, the action to be taken or the final conclusions to be drawn are decisions to be made by the individual student. Participation in this method of instruction is highly individual with the initiative for planning, research, and reporting resting with the student.

Instructor's Preparation for Discussions.

The instructor in preparing for his role of leader or moderator in discussion sessions follows the general principles of lesson planning, with particular attention to the techniques required for conducting the kind of discussion he has chosen. These points of planning include:

1. Study materials.

These provide the student with the background material on which the discussion will be based. These may be texts, text references, lecture notes, the student's written observations, and reading or research data previously acquired by, or given to the student.

2. Study topics and questions.

Particularly for the directed discussion, the conference, and the panel discussion, it is advisable for the instructor to prepare study questions or topics to guide the student in his preparation for the discussion. Together with the study materials, these can indicate clearly the student's assignment and the sequence and manner in which the instructor expects the student to accomplish his preparation. The questions and topics should be selected and expressed so that they will cause the student to focus his learning on the key items of the subject rather than to reproduce something he has read. For example, assume the student has been required to study the characteristics which indicate a good instructor and those which indicate a good case officer. It would be better to ask the student to tell why a good case officer is not necessarily a good instructor than to ask him to name the characteristics of a good instructor. The questions and topics should serve to bring out the key points of the lesson, should show how these points fit into the purpose of the unit, and should require the student to apply the study material.

If these do not reveal clearly the manner in which the discussion will be conducted, the instructor should provide for the use of the student in the study period an outline of the mechanics of the discussion to be held. This will be in terms of how the discussion will open and proceed and the kind and degree of participation expected of all or specific students.

3. Discussion plan.

As the definitions of the various kinds of discussion indicate, the instructor's plan for the discussion will vary as to the purpose and detail according to the specific method used. In all instances, the plan must provide for guiding the discussion in such a way as to produce the most effective learning. Briefly stated, in all forms of the discussion, the instructor's task is to introduce the subject, guide the discussion and summarize. This means that he must guide and control the discussion to insure achievement of the stated purpose. The instructor must use various devices to secure maximum student participation. A discussion which is a series of short lectures by the instructor or which brings into the discussion only a limited number of students gives evidence of poor discussion leadership.

A critical feature of the plan used with any method is a time program showing coverage of each of the phases of the discussion. In the directed discussion the series of logically arranged sub-topics based on the study assignment should be assigned time allotments varying with the instructor's opinion as to the importance and necessity for discussion. Time intervals

should be provided for the instructor's summaries. Although the time schedule is not absolutely rigid, it must be followed, as a minimum, to the extent of introducing each sub-topic. Each lesson plan for a discussion should include a cushion of five minutes to allow for contingencies.

In the conference and panel discussion the instructor's outline provides a reference for him to insure that all major parts of the topic or viewpoints are presented. The instructor budgets the time, gaining consideration for new points that are suggested as well as determining when it is necessary or pertinent to close off a topic in order to make progress.

A. Introduction.

In preparing the discussion plan the instructor designs an introduction to set up a starting point for the discussion. It may also serve to define terms, to establish limits for the conference, to outline the general content to be covered, to indicate the relationship of the topic to previous and future study, to stimulate interest in the subject, and/or to provide a transition of thought from previous instruction. Specifically, it may be opened in several ways:

1. In the directed discussion the instructor makes appropriate remarks concerning the problem to be discussed. He outlines the aspects which may be considered. Then he asks a question or makes a statement, beginning with the level or sub-topic he has determined to be the logical starting point for the development he has outlined.
2. In a conference, after the general problem and method of proceeding has been outlined, the moderator may request a question from the group or may recognize a member who opens the discussion with a statement.
3. In the panel discussion, the instructor usually outlines the level of knowledge of the class to the members of the panel and suggests problems or topics to be considered. The well-prepared instructor will have established a relationship with the panel members which will permit him to start and guide the discussion in order that the objectives of his lesson will be met. Knowing the viewpoints or specialized knowledge of each member, the instructor may initiate the discussion by asking a question of one or all members, or by requesting a statement from one. For early progress in the discussion, it is best to suggest that the instructor begin with the least controversial viewpoint;
4. In the seminar session the instructor asks the student whose project is to be considered to state what he is attempting to do so that everyone will be acquainted with the project. Each member

should have an outline of the problem indicating the purpose of the study, procedure to be followed, conclusions and recommendations the researcher hopes to reach, and problems he would like to have discussed.

B. Seating arrangements.

The lecture classroom is not usually arranged so as to be conducive to the degree of participation an instructor requires in a discussion. Obviously, it directs attention to the instructor and obstructs rather than encourages discussion among the students. Several of the most effective seating plans for discussions are:

1. If the size of the class permits, place the tables or chairs in a U-shaped plan with a separate table for the instructor at the open end of the U.
2. In a smaller class it may be possible to group all students and the instructor around a tight circle of tables, a round table, or a square of tables.
3. For larger groups, where several rows of students' chairs or tables are necessary, align the rows so that the students face toward a point on the centerline of the classroom in the front of the classroom. The instructor will usually stand at this point. Such an alignment of desks permits the students on opposite sides of the room to face each other. This arrangement is suggested for lectures also.
4. Wherever a panel discussion is used it is important similarly that the seating plan emphasize the position of the panel members and encourage discussion among them as well as with the class.

Whichever arrangement is chosen the instructor must keep in mind that he is trying to promote discussion among the students and not attempting to attract anymore attention to himself than is necessary for students to retain the impression that he is the moderator or leader.

The seating arrangement of individuals can influence discussion. The tendency of some participants to do most of the talking and of others to say little or nothing can be aggravated by their locations. This is true when the talkative members are grouped together. The discussion passes from man to man in this little group with the more reserved, isolated students hesitating to break in. Obviously the instructor should distribute the talkative members about the room. By placing more reserved members between the talkative ones, and the average talkers in the remaining seats, the instructor facilitates the flow of conversation from one talkative member to another and then to the average talker, passing acrossed the reserved individuals. This tends to draw them in the discussion.

The instructor should check his place (and the places of the panel members) also. By noting where his attention will normally focus and the blind spots beside him, the instructor can put the aggressive participants where he can overlook them without appearing to do so intentionally and still recognize them whenever he wishes. Reserved participants are placed just beyond the blind spots so that they are easily seen.

C. Use of Aids and Devices.

1. Aids.

Although the success or failure of a discussion depends chiefly on the instructor's skill in questioning, certain discussion aids are essential and others are helpful. It is difficult to conduct a discussion without having some means of recording visibly for the group the progress it is making. Many of the conventional training aids can be used including the blackboard, the large paper tablet or an easel, and the transparent projection slides. In directed discussions the prepared chart and other aids have a place. All of the rules for using them effectively must be followed in the discussion, too, or they will work against the student.

2. Devices.

Recording the progress of the discussion is a device to keep attention focused on the topic and selecting contributions related to the topic which move the discussion forward. Digression is tactfully discouraged by not writing it down. Recording provides the instructor with an opportunity to rephrase or reorganize a thought which has been contributed in a lengthy or confusing way - because the instructor must conserve his writing space. At the conclusion of the discussion, a complete summary of the conclusions established is before the students with the route they used to get there.

In other instances, displays, demonstrations, film slides or motion pictures may be used to illustrate points in the discussion or to stimulate considerations of the less-understood sub-topics of the subject. Their use must be planned carefully to fit the objectives of the discussion.

Student Preparation and Responsibilities.

At this point reference should be made to the definitions of the kinds of discussions effective in our training programs. In part, those definitions outline the preparation and responsibilities borne by the student in the discussions. The use of study questions, topics and reference materials has been pointed out in the discussion explanation of the instructor's preparation. Two principles have been

expressed: 1) The study assignment given the student must indicate clearly the sequence and manner in which the instructor expects the student to accomplish his preparation. 2) Before he studies, the student must be acquainted with the general plan of the discussion and with what will be expected of him. These give direction and meaning to his study and preparation. Student responsibilities for preparation and participation should be pointed out and the means by which the instructor intends to observe or score the students should be explained. Student conclusions or solutions to the points posed in the study topics or questions, with the reasons for the answers, outlines of viewpoints to be presented, questions to be asked at the discussion - all written and turned in to the instructor before the discussion - are means used to ensure student preparation and participation.

Participation in the discussion itself is encouraged by creating an attitude of expectancy with the students about the value of the discussion. Friendly competition on known viewpoints or issues, together with skillful application of the discussion techniques, stimulate discussion. Requirements for written summaries of the discussion, announced participation-scoring schemes, and the knowledge that related instruction will follow often holds the student's attention to the objectives of the discussion and promotes their participation.

The best solution to the problem of getting students to prepare for and participate in discussions is the same as all instruction - make all aspects of the learning situation real and vital enough that the students are interested - motivated.

Techniques of Conducting Discussion.

General - Once a discussion is under way, it is the instructor's task to see that it progresses and covers the main objectives. In order to do so the instructor is concerned with:

1. Focusing attention on a sub-topic or a point sufficiently long enough to allow it to be understood, and assimilated into the stream of the discussion.
2. Selecting and remembering significant questions or contributions to be woven so that the discussion proceeds to a logical conclusion.
3. Keeping the discussion moving according to the prepared outline by suggestions, questions and summaries.
4. Deciding when major points have been developed.
5. Presenting a general summary at the conclusion of the discussion.

Certain general suggestions can be made which will be helpful to you in making discussions effective. They are:

1. Develop a cooperative spirit.

Set an example for the class by being friendly, tactful, courteous and patient. The class will reflect your attitude. Be fair but firm. Be a good listener. Keep the class informed of the objective and the procedures to be followed during the discussion.

2. Clarify problems.

State the problem to be considered or the objectives of the discussion in terms that are clear, and define them so that the scope of the discussion will be limited. Assumptions to be made must be clear to all students.

3. Encourage participation.

Try to get all the students to participate as soon as possible. Take advantage of the experience and skill of the entire group.

4. Avoid dominating the discussion.

Student questions should be answered by other students whenever possible. However, check the accuracy of the answers, re-phrase and elaborate when necessary. Do not be timid about supporting the principles you are teaching.

5. Summarize frequently.

As points are discussed, have them summarized and tied in with each other and with the problem as a whole. Insist that the students assist in the summarization.

Methods of Stimulating and Curtailing Discussion.

The instructor who hopes to achieve his objectives in a discussion must learn to stimulate or curtail the discussion to conform to the plan he has developed for the lesson and to control the digressions that arise in any discussion. Perhaps the best tool for controlling discussions is the questioning technique used by the instructor.

Questioning Technique.

Questions in discussions can be classified according to their uses. The lead-off question starts the group thinking on the over-all topic or a sub-topic. It may or may not be directed to a given person. Usually it can be considered as an "overhead" question, i.e., a question to the entire group. A direct question, of course, is a

means of getting a particular individual to reply. It can be used to draw in the timid person, the student whom you know has a viewpoint or information but has not expressed it. It can be used to give the inattentive student a jolt, to ask the over-talkative man to condense his remarks, or secure a concise, complete answer from a clear-thinking member of the group so as to close-off discussion on a point.

The reverse and relay questions are the ones you use when a student asks you a question in the discussion. To avoid giving an opinion which might close instead of promote discussion, you may either return the question to the person who asked it or pass it on to another person. Instead of answering, your reply is, "What does it mean to you, Mr. Jones?" or, "How would you define it, Mr. Smith?"

Other questions that keep the discussion going are follow-up questions. They are designed to expand the discussion or lead it toward the objectives of the discussion. These are the "why is it so, what are the facts, how does this apply?" - kinds of question.

Generally, questions should be stated to the entire group and then a student should be designated to answer. This prevents others from learning that they will not have to reply and, therefore, ignoring the question. All questions should be clearly worded and should be neither too hard nor too easy. Avoiding questions which can be answered, "yes" or "no" will encourage thinking and talking on the topic.

Through the phrasing of your questions and the tone in which you ask them, you can influence both the response and the effect on the group or the individual questioned. You can:

1. Build a student up by phrasing a question in commendatory terms.
2. Put a student on the defensive by asking him to prove his statement.
3. Inspire a group or an individual.
4. Let a student down.

Insist that answers to all questions (as well as the questions) be loud enough for all to hear and they be directed to the group and not you. Do not repeat questions or answers - it encourages lax thinking and poorly expressed statements.

Encouraging Discussion.

Discussion can be stimulated by other means if the instructor is alert to what is happening in the discussion group. Look for the student who may indicate a desire to participate. Acknowledge him as soon as

the opportunity permits. Give the "silent" student a build-up when you can. The "wordy" student seldom will contribute little of value. He will lead the discussion far afield at first opportunity. Remind him of your discussion rules, break in when he pauses to take a breath, re-directing your question or his statement. Do not invite him to talk. Recognize others in preference to him. Acquainting yourself with the background of each student permits you to select a student to answer who will contribute to the discussion.

Curtailling Discussion.

Some forethought needs to be given to curtailling discussion as well as encouraging it. When all the necessary information on the topic or sub-topics has been developed it is time to terminate the discussion and prepare for transition to the next topic. The instructor must have well in mind, preferably in his outline, what he expects to develop on each point. This is especially true in the directed discussions where he is leading the group to pre-determined conclusions. Use expressions such as, "We have covered the point adequately for our present purpose," or, "That is accepted doctrine" or, after a quick summary, "Let us take up the next point."

Transitional Devices.

Suggestions for effecting transitions from one topic to the next should be included in the lesson plan. Comments such as, "What is another factor to consider?" "What is the next step?" "Is there another phase," and "That leads us to the next topic" closes off discussion and directs it according to the plan. When a question or answer turns the group away from the main topic it is often necessary to remind the class of the time available for discussion or the various points; to request that an answer be "saved" or a question reserved for later instruction; or, to request that a statement be related directly to the subject under discussion.

Development of the Summary.

The final step in the conduct of a discussion is the summary. During the session some irrelevant material is bound to be presented along with relevant material. Sidelight discussions will break out here and there, and at times the interchange of ideas and experiences may become quite lively. Consequently many of the students may have no clear idea as to what was established in the discussion. The instructor should eliminate the irrelevant and erroneous ideas and "drive home" the essential points that he pre-determined (or were developed in the session) as the objectives of the lesson or the conclusions of the group. This summary should include a restatement of the problem, the major viewpoints or topics presented and the conclusions developed with an explanation of the reasoning.

Summary.

The discussion method of instruction includes all activities which tend to develop an interchange of ideas between the instructor and the students and among students. It may be used as the sole method of instruction but is inherently a part of all methods of instruction. When used as the only method it can be effective as a directed discussion, a conference, panel discussion or seminar if the instructor plans the discussion thoroughly. His plan must include:

1. Student requirements.
2. Discussion sequence and a time schedule.
3. Specific consideration as to the moderating techniques necessary with his particular group.

This method is best suited for subject matter which can be acquired readily by reading and study and yet requires clarification before, or as it is applied in other learning situations. It demands skillful control by the instructor and is not as fully applicatory as some other methods of instruction.

TAB

METHODS OF INSTRUCTION: THE DISCUSSION

Definition and Uses of the Discussion Method.

In a previous reference, the lecture was examined as to its technique and value as a teaching process. It was emphasized that effective use of the lecture for instruction required provision for the student's participation through questions, comments, and discussions. A refinement of this process of explaining or telling is known as the discussion method of teaching. Principally, this method emphasizes the interchange of ideas between the instructor and the students, and between and among the students. The solution of a problem or the development of a logical conclusion is achieved by a mutual interchange of experience and thought with the instructor as the moderator or discussion leader. This method of instruction may be used for the purpose of clarifying, interpreting, evaluating and considering the application of facts or concepts which the student has read or studied.

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In the conference and panel discussion the instructor's outline provides a reference for him to insure that all major parts of the topic or viewpoints are presented. The instructor budgets the time, gaining consideration for new points that are suggested as well as determining when it is necessary or pertinent to close off a topic in order to make progress.

A. Introduction.

In preparing the discussion plan the instructor designs an introduction to set up a starting point for the discussion. It may also serve to define terms, to establish limits for the conference, to outline the general content to be covered, to indicate the relationship of the topic to previous and future study, to stimulate interest in the subject, and/or to provide a transition of thought from previous instruction. Specifically, it may be opened in several ways:

1. In the directed discussion the instructor makes appropriate remarks concerning the problem to be discussed. He outlines the aspects which may be considered. Then he asks a question or makes a statement, beginning with the level or sub-topic he has determined to be the logical starting point for the development he has outlined.
2. In a conference, after the general problem and method of proceeding has been outlined, the moderator may request a question from the group or may recognize a member who opens the discussion with a statement.
3. In the panel discussion, the instructor usually outlines the level of knowledge of the class to the members of the panel and suggests problems or topics to be considered. The well-prepared instructor will have established a relationship with the panel members which will permit him to start and guide the discussion in order that the objectives of his lesson will be met. Knowing the viewpoints or specialized knowledge of each member, the instructor may initiate the discussion by asking a question of one or all members, or by requesting a statement from one. For early progress in the discussion, it is best to suggest that the instructor begin with the least controversial viewpoint.
4. In the seminar session the instructor asks the student whose project is to be considered to state what he is attempting to do so that everyone will be acquainted with the project. Each member

should have an outline of the problem indicating the purpose of the study, procedure to be followed, conclusions and recommendations the researcher hopes to reach, and problems he would like to have discussed.

B. Seating arrangements.

The lecture classroom is not usually arranged so as to be conducive to the degree of participation an instructor requires in a discussion. Obviously, it directs attention to the instructor and obstructs rather than encourages discussion among the students. Several of the most effective seating plans for discussions are:

1. If the size of the class permits, place the tables or chairs in a U-shaped plan with a separate table for the instructor at the open end of the U.
2. In a smaller class it may be possible to group all students and the instructor around a tight circle of tables, a round table, or a square of tables.
3. For larger groups, where several rows of students' chairs or tables are necessary, align the rows so that the students face toward a point on the centerline of the classroom in the front of the classroom. The instructor will usually stand at this point. Such an alignment of desks permits the students on opposite sides of the room to face each other. This arrangement is suggested for lectures also.
4. Wherever a panel discussion is used it is important similarly that the seating plan emphasize the position of the panel members and encourage discussion among them as well as with the class.

Whichever arrangement is chosen the instructor must keep in mind that he is trying to promote discussion among the students and not attempting to attract anymore attention to himself than is necessary for students to retain the impression that he is the moderator or leader.

The seating arrangement of individuals can influence discussion. The tendency of some participants to do most of the talking and of others to say little or nothing can be aggravated by their locations. This is true when the talkative members are grouped together. The discussion passes from man to man in this little group with the more reserved, isolated students hesitating to break in. Obviously the instructor should distribute the talkative members about the room. By placing more reserved members between the talkative ones, and the average talkers in the remaining seats, the instructor facilitates the flow of conversation from one talkative member to another and then to the average talker, passing acrossed the reserved individuals. This tends to draw them in the discussion.

The instructor should check his place (and the places of the panel members) also. By noting where his attention will normally focus and the blind spots beside him, the instructor can put the aggressive participants where he can overlook them without appearing to do so intentionally and still recognize them whenever he wishes. Reserved participants are placed just beyond the blind spots so that they are easily seen.

C. Use of Aids and Devices.

1. Aids.

Although the success or failure of a discussion depends chiefly on the instructor's skill in questioning, certain discussion aids are essential and others are helpful. It is difficult to conduct a discussion without having some means of recording visibly for the group the progress it is making. Many of the conventional training aids can be used including the blackboard, the large paper tablet or an easel, and the transparent projection slides. In directed discussions the prepared chart and other aids have a place. All of the rules for using them effectively must be followed in the discussion, too, or they will work against the student.

2. Devices.

Recording the progress of the discussion is a device to keep attention focused on the topic and selecting contributions related to the topic which move the discussion forward. Digression is tactfully discouraged by not writing it down. Recording provides the instructor with an opportunity to rephrase or reorganize a thought which has been contributed in a lengthy or confusing way - because the instructor must conserve his writing space. At the conclusion of the discussion, a complete summary of the conclusions established is before the students with the route they used to get there.

In other instances, displays, demonstrations, film slides or motion pictures may be used to illustrate points in the discussion or to stimulate considerations of the less-understood sub-topics of the subject. Their use must be planned carefully to fit the objectives of the discussion.

Student Preparation and Responsibilities.

At this point reference should be made to the definitions of the kinds of discussions effective in our training programs. In part, those definitions outline the preparation and responsibilities borne by the student in the discussions. The use of study questions, topics and reference materials has been pointed out in the discussion explanation of the instructor's preparation. Two principles have been

expressed: 1) The study assignment given the student must indicate clearly the sequence and manner in which the instructor expects the student to accomplish his preparation. 2) Before he studies, the student must be acquainted with the general plan of the discussion and with what will be expected of him. These give direction and meaning to his study and preparation. Student responsibilities for preparation and participation should be pointed out and the means by which the instructor intends to observe or score the students should be explained. Student conclusions or solutions to the points posed in the study topics or questions, with the reasons for the answers, outlines of viewpoints to be presented, questions to be asked at the discussion - all written and turned in to the instructor before the discussion - are means used to ensure student preparation and participation.

Participation in the discussion itself is encouraged by creating an attitude of expectancy with the students about the value of the discussion. Friendly competition on known viewpoints or issues, together with skillful application of the discussion techniques, stimulate discussion. Requirements for written summaries of the discussion, announced participation-scoring schemes, and the knowledge that related instruction will follow often holds the student's attention to the objectives of the discussion and promotes their participation.

The best solution to the problem of getting students to prepare for and participate in discussions is the same as all instruction - make all aspects of the learning situation real and vital enough that the students are interested - motivated.

Techniques of Conducting Discussion.

General - Once a discussion is under way, it is the instructor's task to see that it progresses and covers the main objectives. In order to do so the instructor is concerned with:

1. Focusing attention on a sub-topic or a point sufficiently long enough to allow it to be understood, and assimilated into the stream of the discussion.
2. Selecting and remembering significant questions or contributions to be woven so that the discussion proceeds to a logical conclusion.
3. Keeping the discussion moving according to the prepared outline by suggestions, questions and summaries.
4. Deciding when major points have been developed.
5. Presenting a general summary at the conclusion of the discussion.

Certain general suggestions can be made which will be helpful to you in making discussions effective. They are:

1. Develop a cooperative spirit.

Set an example for the class by being friendly, tactful, courteous and patient. The class will reflect your attitude. Be fair but firm. Be a good listener. Keep the class informed of the objective and the procedures to be followed during the discussion.

2. Clarify problems.

State the problem to be considered or the objectives of the discussion in terms that are clear, and define them so that the scope of the discussion will be limited. Assumptions to be made must be clear to all students.

3. Encourage participation.

Try to get all the students to participate as soon as possible. Take advantage of the experience and skill of the entire group.

4. Avoid dominating the discussion.

Student questions should be answered by other students whenever possible. However, check the accuracy of the answers, re-phrase and elaborate when necessary. Do not be timid about supporting the principles you are teaching.

5. Summarize frequently.

As points are discussed, have them summarized and tied in with each other and with the problem as a whole. Insist that the students assist in the summarization.

Methods of Stimulating and Curtailing Discussion.

The instructor who hopes to achieve his objectives in a discussion must learn to stimulate or curtail the discussion to conform to the plan he has developed for the lesson and to control the digressions that arise in any discussion. Perhaps the best tool for controlling discussions is the questioning technique used by the instructor.

Questioning Technique.

Questions in discussions can be classified according to their uses. The lead-off question starts the group thinking on the over-all topic or a sub-topic. It may or may not be directed to a given person. Usually it can be considered as an "overhead" question, i.e., a question to the entire group. A direct question, of course, is a

means of getting a particular individual to reply. It can be used to draw in the timid person, the student whom you know has a viewpoint or information but has not expressed it. It can be used to give the inattentive student a jolt, to ask the over-talkative man to condense his remarks, or secure a concise, complete answer from a clear-thinking member of the group so as to close-off discussion on a point.

The reverse and relay questions are the ones you use when a student asks you a question in the discussion. To avoid giving an opinion which might close instead of promote discussion, you may either return the question to the person who asked it or pass it on to another person. Instead of answering, your reply is, "What does it mean to you, Mr. Jones?" or, "How would you define it, Mr. Smith?"

Other questions that keep the discussion going are follow-up questions. They are designed to expand the discussion or lead it toward the objectives of the discussion. These are the "why is it so, what are the facts, how does this apply?" - kinds of question.

Generally, questions should be stated to the entire group and then a student should be designated to answer. This prevents others from learning that they will not have to reply and, therefore, ignoring the question. All questions should be clearly worded and should be neither too hard nor too easy. Avoiding questions which can be answered, "yes" or "no" will encourage thinking and talking on the topic.

Through the phrasing of your questions and the tone in which you ask them, you can influence both the response and the effect on the group or the individual questioned. You can:

1. Build a student up by phrasing a question in commendatory terms.
2. Put a student on the defensive by asking him to prove his statement.
3. Inspire a group or an individual.
4. Let a student down.

Insist that answers to all questions (as well as the questions) be loud enough for all to hear and they they be directed to the group and not you. Do not repeat questions or answers - it encourages lax thinking and poorly expressed statements.

Encouraging Discussion.

Discussion can be stimulated by other means if the instructor is alert to what is happening in the discussion group. Look for the student who may indicate a desire to participate. Acknowledge him as soon as

the opportunity permits. Give the "silent" student a build-up when you can. The "wordy" student seldom will contribute little of value. He will lead the discussion far afield at first opportunity. Remind him of your discussion rules, break in when he pauses to take a breath, re-directing your question or his statement. Do not invite him to talk. Recognize others in preference to him. Acquainting yourself with the background of each student permits you to select a student to answer who will contribute to the discussion.

Curtailling Discussion.

Some forethought needs to be given to curtailling discussion as well as encouraging it. When all the necessary information on the topic or sub-topics has been developed it is time to terminate the discussion and prepare for transition to the next topic. The instructor must have well in mind, preferably in his outline, what he expects to develop on each point. This is especially true in the directed discussions where he is leading the group to pre-determined conclusions. Use expressions such as, "We have covered the point adequately for our present purpose," or, "That is accepted doctrine" or, after a quick summary, "Let us take up the next point."

Transitional Devices.

Suggestions for effecting transitions from one topic to the next should be included in the lesson plan. Comments such as, "What is another factor to consider?" "What is the next step?" "Is there another phase," and "That leads us to the next topic" closes off discussion and directs it according to the plan. When a question or answer turns the group away from the main topic it is often necessary to remind the class of the time available for discussion or the various points; to request that an answer be "saved" or a question reserved for later instruction; or, to request that a statement be related directly to the subject under discussion.

Development of the Summary.

The final step in the conduct of a discussion is the summary. During the session some irrelevant material is bound to be presented along with relevant material. Sidelight discussions will break out here and there, and at times the interchange of ideas and experiences may become quite lively. Consequently many of the students may have no clear idea as to what was established in the discussion. The instructor should eliminate the irrelevant and erroneous ideas and "drive home" the essential points that he pre-determined (or were developed in the session) as the objectives of the lesson or the conclusions of the group. This summary should include a restatement of the problem, the major viewpoints or topics presented and the conclusions developed with an explanation of the reasoning.

Summary.

The discussion method of instruction includes all activities which tend to develop an interchange of ideas between the instructor and the students and among students. It may be used as the sole method of instruction but is inherently a part of all methods of instruction. When used as the only method it can be effective as a directed discussion, a conference, panel discussion or seminar if the instructor plans the discussion thoroughly. His plan must include:

1. Student requirements.
2. Discussion sequence and a time schedule.
3. Specific consideration as to the moderating techniques necessary with his particular group.

This method is best suited for subject matter which can be acquired readily by reading and study and yet requires clarification before, or as it is applied in other learning situations. It demands skillful control by the instructor and is not as fully applicatory as some other methods of instruction.